

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: THE MEANING IS IN THE PEOPLE

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14. ABSTRACT Strategic communication (SC) is an instrument of national power nested in both diplomacy and information. It is the orchestration of actions, images, and words used to advance or influence one's position; however, SC is often misunderstood and wielded without understanding how to use it effectively. If leaders, military or civilian, corporate or government, do not understand the communication process, they cannot effectively develop and implement a successful SC plan or strategy for their organization. This paper considers a number of recommendations to facilitate a leader's understanding of the communication process, and how it is critical to the implementation of SC. Today and future environments will be volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Images, videos, and narratives will dominate the information landscape. Desired end states will hinge on the changing of behaviors, beliefs or perceptions of a selected audience. The communication process is integral to SC, and because of this, it is imperative that leaders understand it and know how to utilize it.					
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: THE MEANING IS IN THE PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

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Strategic communication (SC) is an instrument of national power nested in both diplomacy and information. It is the orchestration of actions, images, and words used to advance or influence one's position; however, SC is often misunderstood and wielded without understanding how to use it effectively. If leaders, military or civilian, corporate or government, do not understand the communication process, they cannot effectively develop and implement a successful SC plan or strategy for their organization. This paper considers a number of recommendations to facilitate a leader's understanding of the communication process, and how it is critical to the implementation of SC. Today and future environments will be volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Images, videos, and narratives will dominate the information landscape. Desired end states will hinge on the changing of behaviors, beliefs or perceptions of a selected audience. The communication process is integral to SC, and because of this, it is imperative that leaders understand it and know how to utilize it.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: THE MEANING IS IN THE PEOPLE

No human capability has been more fundamental to the development of civilization than the ability to collect, share, and apply knowledge. Civilization has been possible only through the process of human communication.

Fredrick Williams¹

The speed at which communication travels through the global information environment facilitated by the Internet, social media and the traditional forms of the news media requires leaders to receive, understand, and decide, but also to act on this information if they are to influence to their advantage and achieve the desired outcome. Since its debut, the term strategic communication (SC) has become a mainstay in many senior leaders' vocabulary and the "catch all" for many things only remotely associated with communication. It has been analyzed, debated and criticized. It continues to be a subject that garners its fair share of attention in blogs, journals and academia, yet it is still generally misunderstood in both military and government organizations.

In some forums, SC is referred to, in the plural form, as strategic communications (emphasis added). In other forums, the term takes the singular form. Some defense experts view SC as an interactive process while others see it as a simple collection of capabilities such as public affairs, psychological operations, and public diplomacy. In military circles, it is often synonymous with media engagement or crafting and disseminating messages, much the same way marketing or advertising firms manage their public relations campaigns.² Finally, there are senior leaders, like Admiral Michael G. Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who view SC as a way of thinking.³ This conversation taking place is healthy and important in order to gain a better

understanding and appreciation for coordinated, integrated, and synchronized communication within and outside the interagency. However, much of the dialogue continues to focus on what constitutes SC and what does not. The conversation needs to focus on the latter half of the term, communication, the core element of SC. The ability to influence perceptions and change behaviors will become increasingly important and challenging in future conflicts and crises. Leaders will need to make a substantial investment in their own cerebral appreciation, and apply as much concentration and effort to shaping the communication narrative as they would with planning and executing the next operation.⁴

Before embarking on a SC strategy to win the hearts and minds of a selected audience, leaders should ask themselves and those around them, what is communication and what does it entail? SC is less about being first with the truth or “bumper sticker” themes; it is more concerned with engaging in conversation, developing relationships and influencing behaviors. The Prussian military strategist Carl Von Clausewitz said, “Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult.”⁵ Replace “war” with “communication” and Clausewitz’s statement has some truth to it. However, if communication is so simple or so fundamental to civilization, as Fredrick Williams asserts, why does it continue to be an area where leaders tend to miss the mark?

Admiral Mullen asserts in his 2009 *Joint Force Quarterly* article, “Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics,” that leaders are not bad at communicating; they simply struggle with credibility and ensuring their actions match their words.⁶ If we accept the view that credibility, actions and words are intertwined and fundamental to

successful communication, one could infer that what the Admiral is implying is leaders do not communicate well at all. In his testimony on SC and public opinion before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, J. Michael Waller, Ph.D., states that communication entails understanding that everything we say or do, or do not say or do, sends a message. He went as far to state that the problem with SC is simple; it is a matter of changing the way people think about communication.⁷

In his article, “Why General Petraeus is Better Suited for Our Afghanistan Mission than General McChrystal Ever Was,” Steven Metz, chairman of the Regional Strategy and Planning Department at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, asserts that leaders like General McChrystal are without question talented combat commanders, but when it comes to be a strategic communicator, they struggle with knowing how to communicate.⁸ During Army Leader Day at the United States Army War College in October 2010, when asked to opine on the subject of SC, one general officer responded by stating that “Strategic communication is nothing more than communication.”⁹ In essence, this general officer was spot-on with his response. Actions, images and words communicate a message to a certain person, group or audience.

“Successful strategic communication requires an interactive relationship between senders and receivers.”¹⁰ SC, in essence, is all about communication, but do leaders embrace this view, and more importantly do they understand it? If leaders, military or civilian, corporate or government, don’t understand the communication process, they cannot effectively develop and implement a successful SC plan or strategy for their organization. A change in the paradigm of how leaders view and understand the

communication process is needed. It starts with getting back to basics as Admiral Mullen has declared; it is time leaders understand why and how to communicate in order to affect SC.

Overview of the Communication Process

Communication (*human* communication, at least) is *something people do*. To understand the human communication process one must understand how people relate to each.¹¹

The communication process is comprised of multiple, interrelated elements such as message transmission, social relationships, context surrounding the message or image, the symbolic nature attached to the message, the condition or conditions in which the message is received, the abilities of the receiver and his inherent and cultured responses.¹² Communication scholar David Berlo posits that the underlying purpose of communication is to influence. Berlo contends that successful communication starts with the communicator knowing his desired intent as a result of his message. The communication process continues with the sender of the communication not only discovering how his message affects or influences his environment, but how it affects the belief and behavior of the receiver.¹³

Communication is a reciprocal process of exchanging signals to inform, instruct, or persuade, based on shared meanings and conditioned by the communicators' relationship and the social context.¹⁴ Communication is the bridge that connects people with one another. It involves people, groups, organizations and societies. It involves influencing each other and being informed. In order to understand the human communication process, one must understand how people relate to each other.¹⁵ The 2008 Defense Science Board's Task Force's final report on SC identified five sustained activities in order for the Department of Defense to be successful. These included

understanding, advising, engaging, influencing, and measuring. In all but the final activity, the communication process is apparent. For example, the act of engaging entailed having a “dialogue of ideas between people and institutions that support national interests and, wherever possible, common interests and shared values.”¹⁶ The point here is that the communication process is an integral component and interwoven throughout SC. Without effective communication, SC cannot be sustained.

Recommendations

Change the Mindset. The communication process has evolved over the past several decades from one that was message-centric to one that is audience based, complex, culturally dependent and meaning dominant.¹⁷ Today, the communication narrative or message fails because it does not consider “the complexities of communication as a *meaning-making* process.”¹⁸ It is time to rethink what makes SC effective; it starts with changing the mindset of how leaders view and understand the communication process. The phrase “words have meaning” can probably be traced back to elementary or grade school. Today, it is the dominating paradigm at the U.S. Army War College, the Army’s premier graduate-level institution for strategic leadership. Professors and students alike fail to understand that by saying “words have meaning” they ignore the cognitive dimension of the person or group on the receiving end of the communication stream. Leaders, in the military or government, have to break away from this traditional communication thought process that words have meaning and adopt an understanding that words don’t have meaning, people do.

Communication does not consist of the transmission of meaning. Meanings are not transmittable, not transferable. Only messages are transmittable, and meanings are not in the message, they are in the message-users.¹⁹

Leaders must change from a “me” centric view of communication to a “we” focused view. It entails understanding that the meaning of any action, image or word is not in the sender, but in the hearts and minds of the person or group receiving the message.²⁰

During U.S. Congressman Steve Cohen’s remarks before Congress on January 18, 2011, he compared the Republican’s tactics to repeal the health care law to those of the Nazis prior to the Holocaust. “They don’t like the truth so they summarily dismiss it. They say it’s a government takeover of health care, a big lie just like the (Nazi propagandist Joseph) Goebbels.”²¹ Many might contend that the Congressman demonstrated poor judgment in his selection of words. This might be true; however, this essay contends that the Congressman did not consider how his remarks would be interpreted in the hearts and minds of those not only sitting in the chamber, but by the news media and consequently the American audience. Congressman Cohen did not consider that his “messages are always interpreted within a larger, ongoing communication system.”²²

President Barrack Obama, in his remarks on February 1, 2011 to the Washington Press Pool regarding the crisis situation in Egypt, proclaimed that “...an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful, and it must begin now.”²³ The news media spotlighted the word “now” and prodded the President to clarify exactly what he intended by it use. Again another example of practicing “me” centered communication versus “we” focused communication. The President’s use of the word “now” was ambiguous. What did he mean by “now?” His speech generated a barrage of questions, not only from the news media, but from the global audience. The President,

as was the case with Congressman Cohen, incorrectly assumed that “communication is the transfer of meanings from person to person.”²⁴ President Obama and Congressman Cohen, like many leaders and communicators, assumed that the American, Egyptian and global audiences are passive in their listening. They failed to realize that communication centers on people, and that the meaning is in the receiver, not the messenger. These two examples of diplomacy and SC support Joseph Nye’s view that “great powers try to use culture and narrative to create soft power that promotes their advantage, but they don’t always understand how to do it.”²⁵

In his essay, “Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics,” Admiral Mullen advocates that actions speak louder than words and that actions must always match one’s words and vice a versa. Leaders must take the time and effort to build trust and relationships with those people and groups with whom they communicate. He stresses that good communication is reliant on “having the right intent up front and letting our actions speak for themselves.”²⁶ He is accurate on all points. However, he fails to stress that leaders must understand that the interpretation of those actions, or words rest, not with the sender, but with the receiver. People and groups are fragmented, geographically and socially and connecting with them through either words or actions is not as easy as it sounds.²⁷ From his article, it can be inferred that leaders understand the purpose of communication. Admiral Mullen contends that the reason why leaders struggle with SC has less to do with understating how to communicate and more to do with understanding policy. He asserts that leaders should focus more on what their actions communicate, and less about how to communicate.²⁸ Actions along with credibility are undeniably important, but to separate it from the communication process

is to err. Communication scholars would argue “audiences determine meaning by interpretation of our communication with them; thus what we say, do or show may not be what they hear or see.”²⁹

If leaders understand the communication process, the act of ensuring one’s actions compliment their words will not be a challenge. Berlo posits that 1) people can have similar meanings only if they have shared similar experiences; 2) meanings are not static, they change with experience; and 3) no two people can have exactly the same meaning for anything.³⁰ His final point resonates with the Bush Administration’s communication strategy immediately following 9/11.

President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice used terms like democracy and freedom as part of their SC strategy, ignoring how these two words had different meanings not only with the American people, but those around the globe.³¹ According to communication experts Aaron Hess and Z.S. Justus, choosing the correct word or words is critical when communicating, and using the wrong words can lead to a misunderstanding of those receiving the message. Hess and Justus assert that, “...war metaphors and language, such as victory, enemies, and allies occlude the reality of counterterrorism efforts.”³² Using the Bush Administration’s narrative to describe the Global War on Terrorism as an example, it communicates a set of preconceived conditions that are associated with war in the cognitive framework of the majority of Americans and ignores those living in the Middle East.

Communication scholars Corman, Trethewey, and Goodall assert that describing the war on terrorism using language associated with past wars, i.e., World War II, leads people to expect the same result.³³ Leaders must understand that receivers of

information are not processors or dictionaries. People and/or groups are not passive in the communication process, but are active interpreters of culture, behavior, and external sensors all of which contribute to their understanding. In order to understand communication, leaders must break away from the simplistic view of communication and “move toward a more complex appreciation and understanding of the communication process, as one that is always audience based, culturally dependent and meaning-centered.”³⁴

One technique leaders can use to assist them in improving their understanding of the complexities of the communication process, and their environment is called sensemaking. Just as the concept of design is used by leaders to develop a holistic view of the operational environment, sensemaking is a collaborative process of creating shared awareness and understanding from different individuals or groups' perspectives and interests in that environment. It consists of the following seven properties:

- People rely on their environment to build their narrative.
- Retrospection is critical; it affects how people or groups view actions or events.
- Sensemaking is a social activity where people and groups share ideas and narratives. The conversations are never static; they are always changing.
- It is continuous. It causes people and groups to shape and frame their narratives in concert with their surroundings. As people or groups become exposed to their environment or surroundings, they build context that helps influence their understanding.

- Context provides reference for connecting ideas to meanings; it assists people and groups in decoding, deciding and acting on communication.
- Identification is central to sensemaking. When people or groups know how they fit in, it helps shape how they interpret events.
- People and groups favor plausibility over the accuracy in their understanding of actions, events and contexts.³⁵

Each of these seven elements overlaps with each other as people or groups engage in dialogue. It is important to note that, through individual interpretations of the communication narrative, the result is the sensemaking of the actions, images and words is continuous.³⁶ Sensemaking provides leaders with a “lens” to see and understand the complexities of the communication process; it is a “way” to view communication from a “we” mindset vice a “me” approach. The human communication process and landscape are littered with ambiguity, cultural and political interpretations and perspectives. In order to develop and execute an effective SC plan and strategy, leaders must change their mindset of how they view and understand the communication process. They must approach communication with a holistic view, and apply those critical, creative and systems “ways” of strategic thinking throughout the process. It is time to throw-out the old and out-dated paradigms of the communication process and begin to accept the idea that words do not have meaning, people do.

Transform how Leaders Communicate. If changing the mindset of how leaders view and understand the communication process is the first step, the next critical area is changing how leaders communicate. For decades, the dominate communication practice used by leaders has been the one-way influence model and today, this 20th

century model continues to dominate U.S. strategic communication efforts with minimal effect. The model is based on the advertising approach of selling a product, except in this case it is a message. The model treats receivers of information as passive in their interpretation and fails to consider the many influencers, i.e., language, culture, and politics, which affect the environment. This communication model or practice was used by the Bush Administration after 9/11. The result was many of the words and messages used to unify support were interpreted in different ways among the global audience. The effect was that the messengers were seen as not credible, and their messages were discounted, changed and/or used against the U.S. These words and others coupled with the reliance on the one-way influence model contributed to the United States' ineffective SC efforts.³⁷

The traditional one-way influence model continues to be the dominant approach to communicating in some U.S. senior military commands. At the United States European Command (USEUCOM) in Stuttgart Germany, the one-way influence model is the dominate method to communicate to various audiences.³⁸ Messages are developed and transmitted through a specific channel or medium. The meanings reside in the minds of the EUCOM leadership and interpretation is left to chance. The message is transmitted repeatedly using the same channel to the same audience over time. The assumption is that if the message is sent enough times to the selected audience, over time the message will achieve the desired result or effect. The fallacy with this process is that it assumes that the selected audience is passive in their interpretation and understanding of the action, message or image.³⁹

The one-way influence model suggests that sending a message is the same as communicating a message; it confuses dissemination with communication.⁴⁰

Communication Theorist Wilbur Schramm referred to this as the “Bullet Theory of communication.”⁴¹ Communication is treated as a bullet, per se, and when it comes in contact with the intended receiver it automatically transfers beliefs, feelings, knowledge and understanding.⁴² The reality is that there is no one sacred message expertly crafted or articulated that can change how people or groups think and act. People and groups actively engage and evaluate both mentally and physically the words, actions, and images they encounter. They file them in a particular context based on their culture, experience, history and political understanding.⁴³

USEUCOM is not alone in its use of the traditional one-way influence model. Leaders, both in the military and government, fell victim to the practice of how to create the perfect persuasive message, instead of concentrating on understanding the reality of the people, group or audience they are trying to influence.⁴⁴ People and audiences cannot be labeled as passive in their interpretation of the message. The understanding that “the enemy has a vote” has to be applied to the communication process in the same way planners apply it in the operational planning process. The intended person or groups receiving the information have a vote, and they bring with them their own context comprised of their own experiences, and cultural and religious identities.

Nowhere was the one-way influence model evident than when Karen Hughes, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, embarked on a tour of the Middle East in 2005 to improve the image of the U.S. and to learn more about the culture and customs. Her intent was to spotlight the freedoms women in the U.S.

possess and enjoy. Though the tour was also a vehicle to promulgate President George W. Bush's SC message, the result was disastrous because Hughes and others involved did not understand the communication process. She failed because of her reliance on the one-way influence model of communication and the Bullet Theory of communication. Hughes did not consider the cultural and social context of the Saudi women she engaged. She assumed that her message of freedom, democracy and equality would be interpreted in the same way it is by women in the U.S. What occurred was the opposite.⁴⁵ Hughes and her approach are not alone. Leaders borrow methods from advertising and public relations practices, treating people and groups as if they are synonymous to business markets. As previously highlighted, words like freedom and democracy are ideas and cannot be packaged and marketed to vast audiences in the same way McDonalds or Pepsi advertises their products. People and groups "interpret messages in ways that fit the existing scheme, rather than ways that senders may intend."⁴⁶

A critical initial step in the communication process and subsequently SC is "understanding the pictures in the heads"⁴⁷ of the people. The one-way influence model "fails because it does not recognize communication as a meaning-making process."⁴⁸ In order for leaders to succeed with their SC efforts, they should deemphasize controlling the message and replace repetition of actions and messages with variation, utilizing different channels or mediums to communicate.⁴⁹ Leaders are expected to communicate and engage. The outdated one-way influence model is a paradigm of the past, and leaders must embrace this change if they are to see their SC efforts succeed.

Standardize it in the PME Framework. “Challenge disinformation.” “Engage the population.” “Consult and build relationships.”⁵⁰ These are just a few of the 24 points from General David H. Petraeus, Commander, International Security Assistance Force/United States Forces-Afghanistan, memorandum titled – “Counterinsurgency Guidance.” Besides being a tool or channel to communicate directly to the troops in his command, one can also deduct from the document his thoughts on communication. The document lays a contextual foundation for interacting and engaging with the people of Afghanistan, undoubtedly his number one audience. Throughout the document, the themes of partnership and relationship resonate, and it can be inferred that one of the cornerstones for successful execution of Counterinsurgency (COIN) is communication. “Earn the people’s trust, talk to them, ask them questions, and learn about their lives...Spend time, listen, consult and drink lots of tea.”⁵¹

General Petraeus advocates building relationships with the Afghans, but for leaders on the ground what does that entail? How does one effectively communicate and subsequently build relationships? Experts and theorists agree that communication is paramount, if not a vital component of the COIN’s success or failure.⁵² The field manual on COIN, FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*, highlights the importance of communication with emphasis on actions, dialogue, two-way communication, engagement and relationships, but where the manual and General Petraeus fall short is an explanation of the “ways” (how to) to communicate. It is easy to tell leaders that communication is critical. The difficult part is putting it into action effectively. What does a leader or diplomat need to know before he sits down with a leader of a tribe, a governor or minister of defense? Without a mechanism or “way” to educate and

demonstrate to leaders the viability of General Petraeus' points, it becomes just another brilliant idea.

American officers train for years on infantry tactics, how to maneuver on an enemy and lead soldiers into battle. But for some of the most crucial challenges for American soldiers today may be the human interactions for which they are often less prepared.⁵³

The above quote resonates when it comes to the communication process. After nearly 10 years of war, military and civilian leaders have embraced the importance of culture awareness education and language training. If communication is woven throughout all facets of society and culture, why not standardize it throughout a leader's professional education and development? An institution, such as the Army, which prides itself on being people oriented, could enhance its leaders by teaching them about the purpose of communication and how to communicate effectively; how sensemaking works; the importance of perception; why relationships matter and how culture affects the communication process. The Army should incorporate the study of communication at the entry levels of professional military education and continue at the military's premier higher-learning institutions, such as the U.S. Army War College. War is complex for many reasons, but fundamentally it is complex because it involves people. To study communication is to study people. It is time the Army embraces the scholarship of communication with earnest and vigor.

Incorporate into Shaping Efforts. The term "shaping" is not new; it has been a part of the U.S. military and government's lexicon for decades. It refers to those activities designed to limit an adversary's options or increase friendly force's options.⁵⁴ If culture, education, religion, and politics are critical to both shaping and the communication process, why isn't the later identified as a key component of shaping

operations? Helmus, Paul, and Glen deduce that the military faces four broad challenges with shaping operations: “Anti-American sentiment; adversaries’ shaping efforts; news and news media; context, including global media; local information; environment, culture and technology.”⁵⁵ The purpose of communication is to influence. Nearly every action, image or message, can shape the opinions of a selected group or audience. If certain actions, words, or images do not translate well with the selected audience, communication could breakdown and shaping efforts fail.

As previously highlighted, the meaning of the message is in the people and not in the message. This is not only fundamental to the communication process, but shaping efforts as well. Shaping efforts, especially as they concern message development and acceptance, share the same elements of the communication process, i.e., culture, language, and environment. Helmus, Paul, and Glen contend that leaders cannot treat communication as a one size fits all concept. If this occurs, it could prove detrimental to shaping operations.⁵⁶ Leaders should integrate the communication process into their shaping operations starting with the cognitive application of design and continuing through the formal planning process, such as the military decision making process. This integration would allow leaders to understand the complexity of the communication process from interpreting an adversary’s actions to making attributions about beliefs, motivations and intentions.⁵⁷

Define the Communication Objectives. A well developed SC plan and strategy will include communication objectives. These objectives will be linked to the overall desired cognitive effect on a selected audience. But when analyzing an audience or segmenting a particular group into like-minded or behaving groups, how can leaders go

about developing their communication objectives to support their SC plan and strategy?

The Behavior, Relationship, Information, and Motivation method (BRIM) is a “way” or tool to assist leaders.

The *behavior* objective is focused on changing the way people act or in some cases not act. The behavior objective is difficult because it represents a lifetime of experiences, and normally requires time and effort to change or modify behaviors.⁵⁸

The key with behavior change is that the people or groups must first be informed and persuaded before any behavioral change can take place.⁵⁹ Persuasive communication requires some yielding on the part of the receiver and the dynamics by which the receiver may allow himself to be persuaded.⁶⁰ It is important to note that persuasion involves more than just developing a new and improved persuasive message; it requires an analysis of the person or group’s system.⁶¹ The following persuasive communication recommendations are offered by Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom:

- If the receiver of the message is opposed to your position, frame the issue by providing both sides of the argument.
- If the person or group agrees with your position, ensure your arguments reinforce this acceptance.
- If the person or group is educated, include both sides of the argument, but avoid omitting any relevant information because this could be perceived as suspicious.

- If the person or group is likely to be exposed to messaging that counters your position, ensure countering with messages that build support and resistance to any type of counter messaging.⁶²

The *relationship* objective focuses on the level and degree of the relationship that is desired with the person or group. These desired relationships could range from adversarial, noncommittal to a trusted partner. When all other shaping efforts have failed, and credibility is damaged from adverse actions or events, the established relationship objective is probably the most powerful and rewarding.⁶³ Communication in terms of relationships reflects four basic dimensions: Emotional, intimacy, liking and submission. Communication in relationships not only reduces uncertainty, but it provides a fundamental ingredient for continuing the relationship. As previously noted, communication involves people and one cannot attempt to understand the communication process alone; it requires not only the relationship between the communicators, but how the communication occurs in the comprehensive social environment.⁶⁴

The *information* objective centers on the knowledge people or groups have garnered as a result of communication. The process of informing people is not as easy as it implies because it involves the interpretation of one another's actions and creates perceptions about thoughts, motivations, and intentions.⁶⁵ The objective is to increase the audience's knowledge, awareness and understanding. The process of informing involves four steps:

- (1) To attract attention to the communicator;
- (2) To have it accepted;

- (3) To have it interpreted as intended by the communicator;
- (4) To have it stored away by the receiver for later use.⁶⁶

The desired effect is the audience takes action (if this is the objective) because his opinions and behaviors have been influenced as a result of this knowledge, awareness and understanding.⁶⁷

The last communication objective is *motivation*, and quite possibly the hardest to achieve. There are many factors that are uncontrollable, such as what motivations in terms of attitudes, beliefs, opinions and actions are desired. For example, an SC strategy may seek to have a foreign minister of defense publicly acknowledge to the news media the benefits of a joint military training venture between his country and the U.S. This leader's motivation to act is the result of increasing the foreign minister of defense's knowledge or changing his behavior. The BRIM method is a tool that can assist leaders during the application of design as well as throughout the military decision making process. It is a "way" to assist leaders in articulating the desired cognitive effect of an audience and achieve the SC goal.

Conclusion

Leaders, military or civilian, are expected to succeed in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environments wrought with friction and tension. Human variables, interactions, and relationships will always dominate the landscape as they have for centuries. It is because of these human variables that effective SC is essential in order to support national and military strategic objectives. In his speech at the Association of the United States Army Conference in October 2007, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated that success as a nation and military will be determined not on the use of military force or power, but more of shaping the behavior of our

adversaries, allies and all those citizens caught in the middle.⁶⁸ Strategic communication will require a substantial investment, by leaders, in the communication process. The war of ideas, battle of the narratives, or the winning of hearts and minds has many things in common, but the one thing that links them is communication. Communication and action are not the ends, but only the means to achieve the desired ends.⁶⁹ If these desired ends entail changing behaviors, beliefs or perceptions, understanding the human communication process must be at the forefront of SC. In this global information age, more than ever, leaders must understand that relationships matter, the communication narrative is not one size fits all, that controlling the message in a country we do not understand and a language we do not speak is futile, and focusing on cooperation and listening vice power and dominance is the best alternative.

Endnotes

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